SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

What the Research Says

According to DuFour and Eaker (1998), "One of the most difficult problems that school practitioners must overcome in their efforts to bring about meaningful school improvement is the mistaken notion that school improvement is a short-term task to be completed rather than a long-term commitment to a new approach." Planning efforts, therefore, should articulate goals and strategies over multiple years.

Harris and Carr (2001), in *Succeeding with Standards: Linking Curriculum, Assessment, and Action Planning,* identify a school improvement planning process that involves collecting data, analyzing that data, and then making instructional decisions that are directly linked to the findings. After thoroughly examining data and making instructional decisions, the next step is to develop an action plan. The action plan establishes key benchmarks, interim checkpoints, and a timeline.

Peters and Austin (1982) make a solid case for monitoring the progress of plan implementation over time in *A Passion for Excellence.* They define monitoring as paying attention to what is happening. For schools and students to make gains, there must be a system for collecting and analyzing data in place.

Harris and Carr (2001) indicate that an important element of school improvement plans is the periodic, interim measurements of student performance. The interim measurements provide the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the action plan. Harris and Carr (2001) use the phrase "Keep your eye on the prize." They suggest that collecting and analyzing data on a regular and consistent basis will track growth and flag stagnation. They cite Schmoker (1996) as saying that data can be "an invaluable tool, capable of telling us how we are doing, what is and is not working, and how to adjust effort toward improvement."

Glickman (1993), in *Renewing America's Schools*, makes two salient points regarding action without study and planning that never turns into action. Action is only effective with careful planning, and planning is wasted without effective action. He states, "Action, planning, and study should be simultaneous; one activity should feed information into the others." The key to this cycle is collecting and analyzing data.

What Virginia's Education Reform Says

Virginia's Standards of Quality (SOQ) speak to the need for school divisions and schools to develop long-range plans. Each school division is expected to develop a six-year school improvement plan that is based upon each school's biennial plan (22.1-253.13:6.C). The SOQ also require that "corrective action plans" be submitted to the Board of Education for any schools "not meeting the criteria for … effectiveness as determined by the Board" (22.1-253.13:3.F).

In the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (SOA), the board determined that the schools not meeting the criteria for effectiveness are those schools rated "Accredited with Warning" in specific subject areas. The *SOA* require that each of these schools develops a three-year school improvement plan, which is to be based on the results of an academic review, and that this plan be approved by the local superintendent and school board (8 VAC 20-131-310.F). This plan must include nine components, which are described in Section 8 VAC 20-131-310.G of the SOA.

Schools are required to report annually on the implementation status of their school improvement plans (8 VAC 20-131-310.H). In this report, schools are to provide evidence (data) of implementation of specific strategies.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING INDICATORS

Number   **Descriptor**

SIP 1   *Content of Plan*

SIP 1.1   Basing the three-year school improvement plan on the results of previous academic reviews, as required by the *Standards of Accreditation*

SIP 1.2   Developing the three-year school improvement plan with the assistance of parents and teachers, as required by the *Standards of Accreditation*

SIP 1.3   Using baseline data/measures relevant to areas for improvement to identify goals for school improvement planning

SIP 1.4   Establishing clear goals that relate to student achievement

SIP 1.5   Establishing yearly, measurable objectives or benchmarks that are linked to goals

SIP 1.6   Describing the strategies to be implemented and the specific action steps to be taken to meet each objective

SIP 1.7   Including data collection activities at regular, logical (not random) intervals throughout plan, as part of strategies/action steps

SIP 1.8   Including a system of monitoring student progress at regular, logical (not random) intervals

SIP 1.9   Selecting achievement indicators that are appropriate to goals and objectives

SIP 1.10   Identifying sources of evidence that are appropriate to strategies/action steps

SIP 1.11   Identifying person(s) responsible for implementing strategies/action steps and collecting data/evidence

SIP 1.12   Establishing timelines over a three-year period and linking shorter timeframes to specific action steps/strategies

SIP 1.13   Including all nine components required by Section 8VAC20-131-310.G of the *Standards of Accreditation.* (Refer to TA Document in *AR User's Handbook* or *SOA* for list of components.)

SIP 2   *Implementation*

SIP 2.1   Focusing implementation on improved student achievement

SIP 2.2   Implementing strategies and action steps in the manner described in plan

SIP 2.3   Documenting implementation of strategies/action steps

SIP 2.4   Collecting and compiling data/evidence of the degree to which strategies and action steps are implemented as described in the plan

SIP 2.5   Monitoring the efforts of staff in carrying out their responsibilities

SIP 2.6   Meeting established timelines for completing strategies/action steps and collecting data/evidence

SIP 2.7   Establishing procedures for macro-to-micro analysis of data

SIP 3   *Results*

SIP 3.1   Establishing a system for monitoring and adjusting the school's improvement plan

SIP 3.2   Analyzing data/evidence to determine the degree to which strategies/actions steps are implemented as intended

SIP 3.3   Systematically monitoring student achievement at regular intervals throughout the year to determine effectiveness of improvement initiatives

SIP 3.4   Using data to determine the impact of improvement initiatives on student learning

SIP 3.5   Modifying goals and/or objectives based upon the analyses of date/evidence

SIP 3.6   Modifying less successful strategies and adding new strategies, as needed, to promote continued improvement

Number	Descriptor
SIP 3.7	Reaching established student achievement benchmarks and/or objectives
SIP 3.8	Communicating the status of implementation and the results to stakeholders